

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Mobile Protected Firepower (MPF)

1. **Purpose.** To provide information on MPF.

2. **The MPF requirement for all IBCTs.**

a. Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs) lack the Mobile Protected Firepower (MPF) capability necessary to defeat enemy prepared positions, destroy enemy armored vehicles, close with the enemy through fire and maneuver, and ensure freedom of maneuver and action in close contact with the enemy. IBCTs require protected, long range, precision direct fire capability to defeat enemy prepared positions, bunkers and armor threats in order to ensure freedom of movement and action during offensive operations or defeat attacking enemy during defensive operations. Without MPF, IBCTs that confront defending enemies in restrictive or urban terrain often have no option but to transition to defense and apply overwhelming indirect fire or air support.

b. IBCTs require improvements in mobility, protection and firepower to enable combined arms maneuver against projected threats which will likely emulate the adaptations of recent opponents while capitalizing on emerging technologies. These enemies will pursue their objectives avoiding what they perceive as U.S. military strengths. They will employ a mix of regular and irregular forces and techniques and will include both state and non-state actors. They will use sophisticated capabilities that increasingly challenge the IBCT, and demand that the IBCT have an MPF system to fight their way through long-range weapons fire and gain physical contact with hard to find opponents to maintain freedom of maneuver for light infantry. In complex environments where enemies intermingle with the population, MPF protection and precision firepower allow Soldiers to take greater risks to secure the population by permitting them to hold fire until the enemy reveals its hostile intent.

3. **MPF in A2/AD operations.**

a. Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2013 mandates “the Army must ensure forces are capable of Joint entry operations”¹. XVIII Airborne Corps lacks an MPF capability to provide offensive direct fires for Infantry units conducting GRF (Global Response Force) Joint, forcible entry operations in A2/AD environments. TCM IBCT briefed MPF as a high risk gap to the VCSA during the TCM-IBCT CPR on 29 July 13. MG Nicholson briefed MPF as a top GRF gap during the MCoE (Maneuver Center of Excellence) Warfighter Conference on 11 September 13.

b. Proliferation of air defense and long-range indirect fire systems require airborne

¹ Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2013, dated 7 February, 2013

forces to execute forcible entry from “offset drop zones,”² assemble outside the range of enemy threats and move rapidly overland to the decisive point of the operation. Historically XVIII Airborne Corps has tasked organized an Armored/Mech company team to the DRF (Division Ready Force) for insertion by air-land. Given potential adversary A2/AD capabilities, this concept does not provide an MPF capability in time to retain or exploit the initiative; as it fails to provide MPF support on the drop zone, during movement to the decisive point of the operation (enemy airfield) or during the assault to seize the airfield.

c. There are no systems currently supporting airborne IBCTs with a capability comparable to MPF. At times this lack of capability can force units in contact to go from M-16 to F-16. Joint fires lack the precision of direct fires thereby increasing risks of collateral damage. Deployment distances may prevent attack and reconnaissance by aviation assets, such as the AH-64 or OH-58D, during the critical initial stages of A2/AD operations. These platforms also have limited station time and are vulnerable to air defense and ground fires. ATGM systems, such as the M966 TOW ITAS and Javelin have limited mobility, no protection and a slow rate of sustained fire. An MPF capability is required to mitigate this critical warfighting gap; failing to do so will introduce an unacceptable level of risk into the execution of GRF Joint, forcible entry operations.

d. With no current air droppable MPF capability we risk losing the initiative in future A2/AD operations³. Currently, dismounted Infantry formations encountering machine gun fire are forced to conduct a movement to defense. The tank was invented to defeat machine guns in World War I; this lesson is still relevant today. The ability to provide precision fires against prepared positions and bunkers, pivot steer and overcome obstacles such as burning vehicles like those encountered in Mogadishu, make tanks the premier vehicular system for urban operations.

3. **Way ahead.** MPF ICD (Initial Capabilities Document) has completed TRADOC and DA One-Star staffing and received ARCIC Director Validation. MPF ICD AROC (Army Requirements Oversight Council) is scheduled for October 2014.

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² The term “offset drop zone,” defined as establishing a drop zone seven to seventy kilometers away from the decisive point of the operation, was developed by XVIII Airborne Corps. It was referenced in MG Nicholson’s recent presentation during the MCoE: Global Response Force “Adapting for the Challenges of Tomorrow” dated 11 September 2013.

³ During operations on the island of Grenada the 1st Ranger Battalion was counterattacked by a platoon of Cuban BTR-60’s. This platoon was subsequently destroyed by AC-130 gunship and 90mm recoilless rifle fires, however, had this been a T-62/BTR-60 company attack in weather not conducive to CAS US forces might have suffered significant casualties and been forced to surrender the initiative.